



Duxbury Free Library

Contemporary Authors

Leslie Davis Guccione

1946-

Year of Birth: 1946

Place of Birth: Wilmington, DE

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Personal Information: Family: Born December 14, 1946, in Wilmington, DE; daughter of Edward Stowman (a chemical engineer and executive) and Winifred (a homemaker; maiden name, Taylor) Davis II; married Joseph Q. Guccione (an accountant), May 3, 1975; children: Christopher J. (stepson), Amy Mendenhall, Taylor Noyes. Education: Studied art with Carolyn Wyeth, 1963-1965; Wilmington Friends School, 1965; attended Institute of European Studies, 1968; Queens College, B.A., 1969. Politics: Independent. Religion: Episcopalian. Avocational Interests: Sailing, painting. Memberships: Authors Guild, Duxbury Writer's Workshop, Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators, and the Junior League of Summit (NJ). Addresses: Agent: Denise Marcil, 685 West End Avenue, New York, NY 10025.

Education: New Entry : 02/14/2000

Career: Held various positions in advertising, public relations, and fund raising, 1972-1978; Folk Art Antiques, Duxbury, MA, partner, 1985-1986; writer, 1985--.

Award(s):

RITA awards finalist, Romance Writers of America, 1985, for *Something out There*; Best Book, International Readers Association, 1991, and Iowa Teen Choice, 1992, both for *Tell Me How the Wind Sounds*; selected as a Best Books, School Librarians International, 1996, for *Come Morning*.

WRITINGS BY THE AUTHOR:

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- (Under name Leslie Davis) *Something out There*, Pocket Books, 1985.

- *Tell Me How the Wind Sounds*, Scholastic, 1989.
- *Nobody Listens to Me*, Scholastic, 1991.
- *Come Morning*, Lerner Publishing, 1995.

"HEAR NO EVIL" SERIES

- (Under name Kate Chester) *Death in the Afternoon*, Scholastic, 1996.
- (Under name Kate Chester) *Missing*, Scholastic, 1996.
- (Under name Kate Chester) *A Time of Fear*, Scholastic, 1996.
- (Under name Kate Chester) *Dead and Buried*, Scholastic, 1997.
- (Under name Kate Chester) *Playing with Fire*, Scholastic, 1997.

"CHEERLEADER" SERIES

- *Moving Up*, Scholastic, 1987.
- *All or Nothing*, Scholastic, 1988.
- *Pretending*, Scholastic, 1988.

FOR ADULTS

- (Under name Leslie Davis) *A Touch of Scandal*, Avon, 1985.
- (Under name Leslie Davis) *The Splintered Moon*, Avon, 1985.
- *Before the Wind*, Silhouette, 1985.
- *Bittersweet Harvest*, Silhouette, 1986.
- *Still Waters*, Silhouette, 1987.
- *Something in Common*, Silhouette, 1987.
- *Branigan's Touch*, Silhouette, 1989.
- *Private Practice*, Silhouette, 1990.
- *A Gallant Gentleman*, Silhouette, 1991.
- *Rough and Ready*, Silhouette, 1992.

- *A Rock and a Hard Place*, Silhouette, 1992.
- *Derek*, Silhouette, 1993.
- *Major Distractions*, Silhouette, 1994.
- *Branigan's Break*, Silhouette, 1995.
- *Borrowed Baby*, Silhouette, 1999.

Has also written copy for the website www.Petopia.com.

Works in Progress: Fiction for adults and children; a seacoast mystery adventure for middle graders.

"Sidelights"

Leslie Davis Guccione, an award-winning author of more than twenty novels for adults and young readers, commented: "I grew up as the oldest of four children in a very active family. My dad was a chemical engineer, then in the marketing end of the DuPont Company, so we moved around the East Coast about every three years during my school days. I was in Wilmington, Delaware, for kindergarten through mid-second grade; Wellesley, Massachusetts, for the mid-second to mid-fourth grade; Summit, New Jersey, for grades four through seven; back to Wilmington for eighth to twelfth grade; then off to Charlotte, North Carolina, for college.

"Moving taught me how to make friends. I was glad to stay put after the seventh grade, but in high school I switched from public to private school and had to develop another batch of friendships at sixteen.

"I've always been what my teachers called 'creatively inclined.' That's to say I was full of imagination. I put on plays in my neighborhoods, drew all the time and wrote pretty awful poetry all through school. I was a terrible speller. My fourth grade teacher told me my spelling was atrocious. When I asked her what that meant and she told me to look it up, I, of course, answered that I couldn't because I didn't know how to spell it! (I work on a computer now and Spell Check has been wonderful.)

"My home in Wilmington during the years 1963 to 1965 was not far from Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, home of the Wyeth family. When I was sixteen I took my portfolio to Carolyn Wyeth and was accepted as a student in her Saturday class. With the exception of her nieces and nephews, I was the youngest student she had ever accepted. Carolyn was the sister of artist Andrew Wyeth and the daughter of N. C. Wyeth, one of America's best illustrators. She taught in his studio.

"I studied with her for two years and my Saturdays were magic. Not only was I painting, I was listening to constant and countless stories of her childhood as one of five children in an enormously talented family. I was there when celebrities and writers would come and interview her.

"After I graduated from Friends School in 1965, I went off to Queens College to major in art, but I also became involved in all aspects of creative writing. I was a member of the literary fraternity Sigma Upsilon and worked on the college's literary magazine. During the summer of 1968, after my junior year, I studied art history and classical music at the Institute of European Studies in Vienna. I traveled with about thirty other students for five weeks before landing in Austria. It was an incredible summer.

Robert Kennedy was assassinated while I was in Portugal; the Vietnam peace talks were taking place in Paris where the Sorbonne riots had closed the university for the first time in history. (We were the first group of tourists let into the city.) Yet another young person was killed trying to escape over the Berlin Wall while I was there and, after a month of studies in Vienna, we took a weekend in Prague just as the Russians invaded! All of these kinds of adventures and experiences shape my stories and my way of looking at life.

"After a few single years in Boston, I married and moved down to a small New England town on the South Shore. Here I fell in love with the sea. Down here much of life revolves around commercial fishing, lobstering, and the cranberry industry. I've gotten to know the lobstermen, harbor master, cranberry growers, sailors: the people who make up the daily rhythms of my corner of the world.

"I decided since I was home with small children that I really wanted to put my creative energies into works of fiction. My first book for young adult readers, *Something out There*, was a romantic mystery, set right out in our harbor. Because I love sailing and know about it, I made my first heroine a teenage sailing instructor and used our town as a model."

Reviewers were quick to compare *Something out There* with Nancy Drew. Kathy Fruitts expressed a viewpoint shared by many when she wrote in *School Library Journal*, "Our 1980s Nancy Drew is Chips." Full of suspense and excitement--with a good love-story subplot--Guccione's first novel was accepted within the genre on its own merits.

Guccione broke out of what some called a formulaic style with *Tell Me How the Wind Sounds*. Through the protagonist, Amanda, the complexities of communication between new friends, especially when one is deaf, are addressed. A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor described Amanda's character development: "Believably, she works hard to expand her sign vocabulary long before she admits that this shy, difficult, sometimes embarrassing friend 'listen[s] better than people with ears that work [and knows] about things that matter.'" Katherine Bruner applauded the work in *School Library Journal* for how the "interaction between the two young people is powerful and believably constructed," and agreed with *Booklist's* Stephanie Zvirin's opinion of the ending, that "avoidance of a trite 'forever after' ending is a welcome change."

Guccione explained how she became interested in problems people face when they experience hearing loss: "The son of a friend of mine is profoundly deaf and I began to think about a story with a deaf character, one that would appeal to both hearing-impaired and hearing readers. The result was *Tell Me How the Wind Sounds*. I set the story on Clark's Island, right out in the bay. It is a simple story about a deaf boy whose life is turned upside down when a hearing teenage girl invades his island for the summer. The International Reader Association Young Adult Readers named it one of their best books of 1991. In 1996 I created the 'Hear No Evil' series for Scholastic which featured deaf teenage detective Sara Howell.

"In 1990 my editor at Scholastic read an article about whale watching being harmful to whales in Hawaii and asked if I might like to develop something with that theme, set in New England. I used the whale topic as the vehicle in *Nobody Listens to Me* and wrote about the conflict of two people, a father and daughter, who love each other, yet get caught up in a disagreement over the issue."

The book also won praise from reviewers for tackling a subject that is very real to children, but often overlooked by adults. Robert Hale summarized the key point in his review for *Horn Book*: "Not being listened to when one is being most serious is one of the worst crosses children have to bear." The subject at hand is not important. "What matters is that they be heard." In this case, Mendy took to the

streets to protect whales endangered by waters unsettled by heavy boat traffic, to which her father contributed with his sight-seeing boat.

Guccione also commented: "I'm always working on more ideas, many of which are requests from my own children. Now I'm thinking again about the Delaware area and hope to write some historical fiction set in the black powder years along the Brandywine River."

The result, in part, was the novel, *Come Morning*, about one family's involvement with the Underground Railroad during the Civil War. Freedom Newcastle, aged twelve, is the son of a freed slave who has romanticized his father's role in the movement. He takes a big step toward maturity when he's forced to help. Ann Burlingame, in a *School Library Journal* review, recognized the novel's "excellent characterization," and recommended it to students studying that era.

Reflecting on her work, Guccione stated: "My interest in painting and visual expression has a noticeable effect on my style. I write colorful stories, full of description and sense of place."

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

PERIODICALS

- *Booklist*, November 1, 1985; December 1, 1998.
- *Horn Book Magazine*, May-June, 1991.
- *Kirkus Reviews*, November 15, 1989.
- *Publishers Weekly*, July 12, 1991, p. 66.
- *School Library Journal*, January, 1986; January, 1989; October, 1989; November, 1995.
- *Voice of Youth Advocates*, February, 1986, p. 391.

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